



2008

**From public/private spheres to tout autre est tout autre:
christianity and politics in Carl Schmitt's The concept of the
political and Jacques Derrida's The gift of death**

William Durden
Western Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cedar.wwu.edu/wwuet>

 Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Durden, William, "From public/private spheres to tout autre est tout autre: christianity and politics in Carl Schmitt's The concept of the political and Jacques Derrida's The gift of death" (2008). *WWU Graduate School Collection*. 3.

<https://cedar.wwu.edu/wwuet/3>

This Masters Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the WWU Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in WWU Graduate School Collection by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

FROM PUBLIC/PRIVATE SPHERES TO *TOUT AUTRE EST TOUT AUTRE*:
CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS IN CARL SCHMITT'S *THE CONCEPT OF THE
POLITICAL* AND JACQUES DERRIDA'S *THE GIFT OF DEATH*

By

William Durden

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Moheb A. Ghali, Dean of the Graduate School

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr. Christopher Wise, Chair

Dr. Kathryn Vulic

Dr. Cécile Hanania

MASTER'S THESIS

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree at Western Washington University, I grant to Western Washington University the non-exclusive royalty-free right to archive, reproduce, distribute, and display the thesis in any and all forms, including electronic format, via any digital library mechanisms maintained by WWU.

I represent and warrant this is my original work, and does not infringe or violate any rights of others. I warrant that I have obtained written permissions from the owner of any third party copyrighted material included in these files.

I acknowledge that I retain ownership rights to the copyright of this work, including but not limited to the right to use all or part of this work in future works, such as articles or books.

Library users are granted permission for individual, research and non-commercial reproduction of this work for educational purposes only. Any further digital posting of this document requires specific permission from the author.

Any copying or publication of this thesis for commercial purposes, or for financial gain, is not allowed without my written permission.

Signature _____

Date _____

**FROM PUBLIC/PRIVATE SPHERES TO *TOUT AUTRE EST TOUT AUTRE*:
CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS IN CARL SCHMITT'S *THE CONCEPT OF
THE POLITICAL* AND JACQUES DERRIDA'S *THE GIFT OF DEATH***

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
William Durden
May 2008

Abstract

This essay argues that Carl Schmitt's political theory in *The Concept of the Political* functions as a site for exploring the relationship between Christianity and politics in Western history. The author suggests that Schmitt's theory is both informed by and yet inconsistent to orthodox Catholicism through an analysis of the terms *public* and *private* as used in Schmitt's writings and in St. Augustine's *The City of God*. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's consideration in *The Gift of Death* of the concept of responsibility, the author also posits that Schmitt's political definition, here representative of realist politics, is not only opposed to Christianity but to the history of the ethico-political in the Western. This essay concludes by suggesting renewed critical discussion of the intersection of religion and politics.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Christopher Wise for the sustained academic relationship he developed with me through a graduate seminar on politics and theory, a directed study on Derrida and religion, and thesis credits. This work is indebted to that relationship, and to the careful and thoughtful guidance that he offered whenever I sought it. I also wish to acknowledge his encouragement and good humor throughout. Dr. Kathryn Vulic and Dr. Cécile Hanania each offered their specific subject expertise as committee members, and also provided invaluable feedback in matters of academic readership. I wish to especially recognize Dr. Vulic's assistance with my introduction, and Dr. Hanania's suggestions regarding my reading of Derrida. Dr. Kristin Mahoney, through a graduate seminar on the Victorian city, contributed excellent reading suggestions which influenced my argument. Eric Petracca read early drafts of my first chapter and offered insightful commentary. Matt Atwood raised an important question that clarified my direction, also at an early stage, and Josh Butler sharpened my reading of St. Augustine. Finally, this project would not have been completed without the immense support network I drew on, which includes my entire cohort (with special thanks too numerous to list), and most importantly Beth Durden, whose respect for and belief in me enabled this project initially and throughout.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Introduction	1
Chapter One – The Loophole	6
Chapter Two – Responsibility and the Ethics of Death	26
Conclusion	42
Works Cited	44

Introduction

When Giovanna Borradori asked Jacques Derrida about the role of religion in the context of the U.S. War on Terror, Derrida remarked that the United States,

despite the separation in principle between church and state, [employs] a fundamental biblical (and primarily Christian) reference in its official political discourse and the discourse of its political leaders: 'God bless America,' the reference to 'evildoers' or to the 'axis of evil'... (117).

Derrida makes this observation to sketch a general outline of the American theologico-political as opposed to the more frequently emphasized (in the United States) Islamic fundamentalism associated with the September 11th attacks on U.S. soil. He proceeds to reserve some hope that the "modern tradition of Europe" can be deconstructed to make way for "the possibility of another discourse and another politics" besides that of competing fundamental religious worldviews (118). One part of this modern tradition of Europe that Derrida refers to is the conceptual space of the university, articulated by Kant and affirmed by Derrida as a place "where critical debate must remain unconditionally open" (*Learning to Live Finally* 49). In the interview he gave shortly before his death, Derrida mentions that the legacy of the university is "from Europe and from Greek philosophy; it was not born elsewhere" (50).

These statements of Derrida's, drawn from his reaction to the U.S. War on Terror as well as from his reflective thoughts on his own critical legacy,

foreground the dual questions that propel my project. In one instance, what to make of the intersection of politics and religion in the U.S., thrown into relief by the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq following 9/11? At the same time, what to make of it from within a university space? Derrida's comments both foreground this project and link it to his work on these questions. Other commentators on 9/11 fail to match the level of attention Derrida gives to religious concerns. Jürgen Habermas, for example, responding also to Borradori, argues that there is a universalism which is "the egalitarian individualism of a morality that demands mutual recognition, in the sense of equal respect and reciprocal consideration for everybody" (42). This liberal moral universalism, "which is...open to all," paves the way for tolerance, a secular doctrine for Habermas that Derrida argues remains locked within the Christian tradition (*Acts of Religion* 60). Habermas doesn't deny this or ignore religion; in fact he recently noted that Christianity is not just an influence, but a progenitor of the secular universalism he believes in and advocates.¹ But if Habermas accepts that Christianity to some extent foregrounds secular universalism, Derrida stops to interrogate how the nature of that grounding inflects and influences a universal moral 'existence' as such. As Barbara Johnson says of deconstruction in her translator's introduction to *Dissemination*, "it is an analysis that focuses on the grounds of [a theoretical] system's possibility" (xv).

¹ See *Time of Transitions* pp. 150, 151.

To borrow Johnson's phrasing as a formula for expressing the aim of this project, I will first focus on the grounds of the relationship between Christianity and political realism by reading the political theory of Carl Schmitt through the lens of Augustinian theology. My exposure to Schmitt is through Derrida's *The Politics of Friendship* (and subsequently in *The Gift of Death*), but my critique of Schmitt through the lens of theology is fueled by my hypothesis that Schmitt would not, in a close analysis, be able to keep his Catholicism outside of, nor consistent to, his political theory. My reading of Schmitt's work here functions almost analogously in its first movement, as an example of the problem of 'separation of church and state' when that doctrine is claimed by a Christian (nation.)

I understand, as I assume many do, that the First Amendment prohibits a national religion while protecting the rights of religion in general. This does not stop a general usage of the phrase "separation of church and state" from requiring Noam Chomsky to qualify his statement that "the U.S...is one of the most extreme religious fundamentalist cultures in the world; *not the state, but the popular culture*" (9-11 21; emphasis mine). Chomsky's distinction further defines the space I wish to work in: when the state is not officially religious, but the popular culture is, then the policy of a separation of church and state is inadequate to address the dynamics between the two. This problematic, I

argue, can be investigated by examining the distinctions between what is public and what is private.²

My reading of Schmitt places stress on his use of this distinction. Even though Augustine and Schmitt would seem to employ the terms 'public' and 'private' in different contexts and with different purposes, I hope to show that there is a specific sense in which Schmitt contorts what these terms mean in Augustine's *The City of God* in order to fit his political realism within the limits of Christian theology. Hence, I argue that an analysis of these concepts as employed by Augustine and Schmitt produces an incompatibility with Christianity and Schmittian (realist) politics. It is not just that Schmitt is unable to keep his Christianity and his politics clear of each other, then, but that Schmitt's political theory is not consistent with his religious faith. How could it be – or how could it be easily or naturally so – when politics, or the Platonic *polis*, is pre-Christian? As Derrida emphasizes in *The Gift of Death* (written prior to 9/11 but addressing conflict between "religions of the book"), the polis is not a Christian concept. Yet Christianity's relationship to politics is essential in the sense that the historical 'accident' of Christianity is that which has been constituted in/by Euro-American history. Since neither the polis nor Christianity are stable things, my interest is in the historically contingent as the historically real, and thus the so-called accident of Christian politics as

² A clear example of this in American politics would be the speeches by John F. Kennedy and Mitt Romney addressing their non-mainstream religious beliefs. Both affirm the separation of church and state while simultaneously acknowledging the role their private 'conscience' (Kennedy) and 'convictions' (Romney) would play in making decisions of national policy.

historically and therefore necessarily paired with philosophy and with politics in Western history. I take this above outline to be relevant to and emblematic of the problem in the War on Terror's fundamentalist/ly Christian biblical principles.

The fact that Schmitt's political theory is inconsistent with his Christianity leaves the relationship between Christianity and politics open for further analysis. With this assertion I do not wish to claim that the intersection of politics and religion is inherently dangerous and that the two must be kept separate. Rather, the important question becomes: if Christianity and politics are two different 'things' that have been introduced to each other but have not been thus far reconciled to each other, then what can be done to think the impasse and tension between the two? How to articulate a position taking into account that the Christian worldview includes activity in the public sphere, while still affirming, as Habermas does, religion's "non-exclusive place within a universal discourse" (31)? This question, which haunted me after my analysis of Schmitt, eventually led me to *The Gift of Death*. While I would not say that this work provided a definitive answer, Derrida does offer a thinking through of Christianity and politics that offers a new way of talking about political responsibility or the ethico-political that critically engages the Christian tradition as it relates to both politics and ethics in the West. To put it in the terms of this project's primary inquiry, he articulates a stance that is able to cross the boundaries established by the trope of public/private spheres.

Chapter One – The Loophole

The political adversaries of a clear political theory will, therefore, easily refute political phenomena and truths in the name of some autonomous discipline as amoral, uneconomical, unscientific and above all declare this – and this is politically relevant – a devilry worthy of being combated.

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*

Carl Schmitt was a German legal and political theorist. His most discussed work is *The Concept of the Political* (1932), a critique of liberalism in which he defines the political as the public space from which one state names another state as either friend or enemy. Derrida, Habermas, and Slavoj Žižek, among many other contemporary thinkers, all take up Schmitt and his political definition. In 1987, *Telos* devoted a special issue to readings of Schmitt. Editors G.L. Ulmen and Paul Piccone argue in their introduction to the issue that Schmitt's questions "have been ignored for too long," even if his answers are largely "irrelevant" (14).³

³ Schmitt was also affiliated with the Nazi party from 1933-1936. Nazi officials questioned Schmitt's commitment to party principles; by the mid-30's his role diminished, and he was held but not charged at the Nuremberg trials. These are by no means insignificant details, but they have been explored elsewhere. Furthermore, discounting Schmitt's thoughts because of his Nazi ties only encourages turning a blind eye to what details might be significant in Schmitt's work outside (although never truly outside) of his most heinous affiliations. For an introductory discussion of Schmitt's role within the NSDAP, see Tracy Strong's foreword to *The Concept of the Political*, pp. xxiii-xxvii, where he asks "how a man who wrote with some eloquence about the dangers of universalism could have written what he wrote in support of Nazi policies."

Tracy Strong's foreword to *The Concept of the Political* emphasizes that the interest in Schmitt draws from three central questions: "the relation between liberalism and democracy"; "the relation between politics and ethics"; and Schmitt's understanding of the term 'enemy' for "the relation between domestic and international politics" (xiii). Do these strands of inquiry have any points of convergence? I argue that they do, and I will approach the complexities of the preceding questions with and through a consideration of religion. A discussion of the ethico-political, as I will demonstrate with my reading of *The Gift of Death*, cannot take place without a discussion of religion as part of the history of western philosophical and political thought. Furthermore, religion as a necessary access point to a thinking through of the ethico-political demands a reassessment of liberalism – by which I always refer to a secular liberalism – and its relegation of the religious to the private sphere.

From the assumption of the relevance of religion, then, this chapter will take shape through a comparative reading of Schmitt and Augustine. First, I will read Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* (with his *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* included for added context) through the lens of Augustine's *The City of God*. My reading will not be so much a demonstration of Schmitt's limitations as it will be an attempt to think about the ways in which Schmitt's relegation of religion to the private sphere functions. Specifically, I identify two spaces for thinking. In the first, Schmitt's failed attempt to subordinate the

religious to the political stands as a critique of the assumption that religion can be relegated to the private sphere. My reading challenges the idea that religion is an inherently dangerous force in the public sphere, and instead takes the position that religion is an always productive force that can and should be subjected to critical inquiry. In the second, Schmitt does violence to his own theology (located in *The City of God*) by trying to enmesh Catholicism with his political concept. Christianity cannot then be said to be in the service of Schmitt's political realism, and its relationship to politics remains, or becomes again, open.

In *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt defines the term 'political' as the distinction or identification of friend and enemy on the state level; that is, the political is the process of naming other states as friends or, crucially, as enemies one declares war against (26). According to Schmitt, few attempts had been made at his historical moment to clearly define the realm of the political. This proves problematic for Schmitt because the absence of a political definition in the face of liberalism weakens the function of the state. For Schmitt, when 'state' collapses in liberal enlightened Europe, economic interests and universal humanist ethics rule (22,23; 76,77). Schmitt argues, for example, that "an imperialism based on pure economic power will naturally attempt to sustain a worldwide condition which enables it to apply and manage, unmolested, its economic means" (78). This economic logic disables

a people's ability to recognize the enemy as enemy, as the collective other who is fundamentally opposed to one's way of life (27,33,35).

Because of this reality of capitalist liberalism, Schmitt argues, a clear concept of the political must be enunciated in order to protect the domain of war, and the decision to wage it, from the logic of an economy or of an intellectual debate that would seek to universally define the human (70). The state must have a finite, and clarified, role: a specific function and a reason for existence. The state exists, according to Schmitt, based on its authority and ability to decide who is friend and who is enemy, and to take such action as the identification of friends and enemies requires – including the decision of when to wage war. For Schmitt, the political decision occurs when the state “can correctly recognize, understand, and judge...whether the adversary intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence” (27). Schmitt does not create a precise criteria for the moment of the decision. His project in *The Concept of the Political* is to define what the political fundamentally ‘is’: an ability to identify, as a sovereign state, “an existential threat to one's own way of life,” and to do it in such a way as not to extinguish life over something like economic gain, which for Schmitt is “sinister and crazy” (48, 49).⁴

Schmitt's goal is not to create a moral dictum in regards to war, but rather legitimate cause, which again is left open for the sovereign state to

⁴ Schmitt appears to use the word ‘existential’ not in a Sartrean sense, but as a form of ‘existence.’ His understanding of the political is that it is a *real* category: “The friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing” (33).

name. To clear a space for sovereignty, Schmitt employs a separation of distinct realms, such as the economic, the moral, etc., as well as the separation of the public and private sphere. The political is for Schmitt wholly within the public sphere. And while Schmitt maintains the separation of politics and morality, there is a sense in which his political definition seems to proclaim a kind of moral superiority, which Leo Strauss understood as early as 1932.⁵ If killing through economic sanction is sinister and crazy, what is killing through hand-to-hand combat, or killing on a battlefield with clearly delineated lines? The answer lies not in the definition of the political, nor quite in the active *naming* of the other as enemy who threatens a collective's way of life, but in the construction of the way of life being threatened – something that Schmitt does not acknowledge. Schmitt tries to keep his political sphere clean of moral, aesthetic, economic, and religious considerations. He argues that the political can “exist theoretically and practically, without having simultaneously to draw upon all those moral, aesthetic, economic, or other distinctions” (27). Yet he demonstrates how economic or religious motivations can legitimately contribute to the political process: “Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy” (37). And is not every way of life some amalgamation of the other antitheses that Schmitt sections off? If one takes away the religious, the moral, the aesthetic, and the

⁵ I am hardly advocating a Straussian critique of liberalism here; nonetheless, for Strauss' early critique of Schmitt, see “*Notes on...*” immediately following U of Chicago P's *The Concept of the Political*, especially paras. 1 and 27.

economic, for example, then what parts of a people's way of life could possibly be left to engage in the decision making process he describes?

In Schmitt's political realm, a collectivity must necessarily draw upon some aspect of the social (public) in order to define itself politically. Schmitt thinks that which constitutes a way of life can 'transform' into the political, which is the defense of or pride in a way of life, without retaining any trace of the original constitutive element. Furthermore, "the political is the most intense and extreme antagonism"; it is thus accorded a kind of primacy (29). It follows that whatever informs the political contains the kernel of antagonism, through a sovereignty that is for Schmitt given (Strong xiv). The question then becomes not whether Schmitt's critique of liberalism is feasible (it is not) but which kernel might fuel the concept of the political as *Schmitt's* political? What antagonisms of Schmitt might prove cogent to a critique of liberalism? I turn to the specific historical examples Schmitt offers up as moments of political decisions in order to demonstrate what is for Schmitt essential. Near the end of his essay, Schmitt exemplifies Oliver Cromwell's address delivered to his collectivity, England, in 1656:

Why, truly, your great Enemy is the Spaniard. He is a natural enemy. He is naturally so; he is naturally so throughout – *by reason of that enmity that is in him against whatsoever is of God.* 'Whatsoever is of God' which is in *you*, or which may be in you...[he who considers the

Spaniard to be an] “accidental enemy” [is] “not well acquainted with Scripture and the things of God” (qtd. in Schmitt 68)⁶.

The enemy here is identified as an enemy either of God or of what God has put in the Englishman as English. The Scriptures themselves will inform the Englishman, if only he would look, that the Spaniard is fundamentally other – the stranger with whom one must fight to the death. For Schmitt, Cromwell’s speech (grounded in an essentialist-religious argument) represents the “high point” of politics, when “the enemy is, in concrete clarity, recognized as the enemy” (67).⁷ It is more than chance that Schmitt selects as an example of a proper political decision one that grounds itself in religious essentialism. He does not mention his Catholicism in *The Concept of the Political*, and if his theory could be said to be possible then it would seem true that his religion would not affect his theory. But Schmitt’s motivations are of interest because they challenge his assertion that the original antagonism is not relevant to the political realm.

Before examining Schmitt’s work with Catholicism, though, what does it mean for him to have a Catholic worldview? It is a major assertion of this

⁶ Bracketed words and italics are Schmitt’s, as his citation of Cromwell is a mix of direct quote and paraphrase.

⁷ The fact that Cromwell’s England was Protestant and Spain Catholic provides a moment for emphasizing Schmitt’s thesis. Schmitt is a Catholic, and he develops some anti-Protestant sentiment in some of his writings, but his concern here is not for morality or superiority of Catholicism to Protestantism. If one identifies the other as hostile to one’s own way of life, then one has correctly applied Schmitt’s theory; hence his approving account of Cromwell here. Moral judgments may come after the fact, but the moment of decisionism is (supposedly) amoral, areligious, etc.

project that Schmitt's Catholicism can be neither brushed aside, nor uncritically examined. What exactly was Schmitt's Catholicism? Was it orthodox? Was it informed? Schmitt indicates an explicit familiarity with Catholic theology when he quotes Augustine in his 1917 essay "The Visibility of the Church": "The Church remains, like each of its members, always peregrina in saeculo et pertinens ad civitatem Dei [A stranger in the secular world and reaching out to the City of God]" (56). This explicit citation from *The City of God* characterizes Schmitt as both an orthodox and informed Catholic inasmuch as he is not only familiar with but also able to reference and ascribe authority to Augustine.⁸

Writing shortly after the fall of Rome, St. Augustine of Hippo first conceived of *The City of God* as a response to accusations that Christians were to blame for Rome's fall. Yet Augustine's discussion of these temporal events is itself contextualized within a narrative of eternal, spiritual significance. Augustine thematizes his spiritual narrative through the metaphor of "the glorious city of God" (*The City of God* 3). This city of God is the only city that has any real (eternal) significance to Augustine, but in order to "persuade the proud how great is the virtue of humility," and hence perhaps to lead some to recognize the eternal city, Augustine concedes that "we must speak also of the earthly city" (3). Augustine's larger aim, then, accomplished primarily in books

⁸ In the interest of accuracy and respect for differences between Protestant and Catholic faiths, I refer to Schmitt's Catholicism more often than his Christianity. However, never when I refer to Schmitt's Catholicism am I trying to mark him as anything other than broadly Christian. My argument is concerned with the intersection of Christianity and politics in its most general articulation.

11-22, is “to treat of the origin, and progress, and deserved destinies” of two cities: the city of God, and the earthly city (346).

To speak of the earthly city and the city of God (and to oppose in some sense the one to the other), even though that is what *The City of God* does, is to belie the complexity of Augustine’s argument. The names seem to suggest a clean split between the material and the spiritual: the earthly (material) and city of God (spiritual.) However, the two cities “have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; [and] the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self” (*City of God* 477). The earthly city, first established by Cain after he kills his brother Abel, is patterned after the ‘love of self’ instigated by Satan and the angels who followed him into hell after his expulsion from heaven (479). This original cultivation of self-love (hell), which predates the ‘original sin’ of Adam and Eve, mobilizes the possibility for Cain to form a collectivity of self-love. The ‘earthly city’ as exemplified by Cain’s city is a material mirror of hell. Separation from God through self-love is located both spiritually in hell and materially in the form of the earthly city. The signifier ‘earthly city’ refers to both a material and a spiritual concept, so that it is opposed to the city of God not through materiality or spirituality alone but through self-love as opposed to love for God in any circumstance.

What, then, of the Christians on earth? They, like Abel (who did not build a city) are “sojourners” – their home is not on earth, though they live on

earth for a time. Drawing on Paul's allegorical re-interpretation of Abraham's sons Ishmael and Isaac, "the one by a bond maid, the other by a free woman," Augustine names Jerusalem as "a symbol and foreshadowing image of this [godly] city" (479). The temporal figure of ancient Jerusalem reminds Christians that the city of God, for them, is "to be," and not present on earth. Although only one short-lived material city among all the cities of the earth represents the city of God, it is nonetheless a material ground for the spiritual city of God, so that once again the material/spiritual difference is inessential. The spiritual realm predates the material realm, while choices made in the material feeds into and affects the spiritual. For the Christian, "the city of the saints is above, although here below it begets citizens" (479). These citizens are not born to God, though. Citizens of earth are born "by nature vitiated by sin" and require the grace of God to repair them to the godly city in due time. The earth belongs more to Satan than to God, which is why the earthly city in general refers to self-love (hell) and the Christian is likened to Abel, a "sojourner" who reserves a small space for the love of God on earth. The complexity of the cities and the spiritual/material divide is such that Augustine must at one point clarify "that there are not four cities or societies – two, namely, of angels, and as many of men – but rather two in all, one composed of the good, the other of the wicked, angels or men indifferently" (380). The distinguishing factor between the earthly city and the city of God is the

difference between a love of self and a love of God, irrespective of matter or form.

This analysis of some of the essential tenets of Augustine's theology demonstrates where religion and Schmitt's political concept intersect. Augustine theorizes what is for Schmitt the social nature of Catholicism, and he could even be said to discuss the difference between what is "public" and what is "private" from a Christian-eternal perspective. Augustine develops what I consider as his theory of the public/private antitheses from within the broad framework of good and evil: the love of God as access to the public good (the City of God), and the love of self to a private good, which is another name for hell. As Augustine constructs the angelic realm, "some steadfastly continued in that which was the common good of all, namely, in God Himself...others, being enamored of their own power, as if they could be their own good, lapsed to this private good of their own" (380). Several analogous antitheses mark the differences leading up to a descriptive listing of how Augustine might use the marker 'public/private':

- love of God/love of self
- city of God/city of Earth
- heaven/hell
- public good/private good
- good/evil
- public/private.

The love of God grants access to the city of God, which is heaven and a public good and indeed both good and public. The love of self belongs to the city of Earth, the citizenship of which terminate in hell, which was created by the private good cultivated by fallen angels. Private good is actually both private and evil; a falling away from the "good which is alone simple, and therefore alone unchangeable, and this is God" (354).⁹ In the allegory of Ishmael and Isaac alluded to earlier, Isaac represents "the children of the free city, who dwell together in everlasting peace, in which self-love and self-will have no place, but a ministering love that rejoices in the common joy of all, of many hearts makes one, that is to say, secures a perfect concord" (481). Furthermore, the public, shared, social nature of the city of God, and indeed the metaphor of the city itself, is not accidental, or a matter of personal preference, "For how could the city of God either take a beginning or be developed, or attain its proper destiny, if the life of the saints were not a social life?" (680).

While Christians on earth are sojourners in one sense, then, they are nonetheless expected to be social beings. In fact, *City of God* would posit the Christian society as the true social: the public good that comes from community with God. Schmitt shares this view. Ulmen notes in his introduction to *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, Schmitt's 1923 essay, that this

⁹ In this sense, then, the 'private' monastic or anchoritic lives, for example, are not really private in Augustine's definition of the word. Yet, the tension as to whether a withdrawal from the human social network is Christian or not is a complicated question that raises conflicts within Augustine's own text. See *City of God* 680-685 for Augustine's discussion of the pitfalls and pain of human social life.

lesser-known work of Schmitt's "is directed against inwardness...essentially, it is an argument against abandoning the world. Since the Church, as the unseen body of Christ, became visible, 'no visible man should leave the visible world to its own devices'" (xiii). This observation of Ulmen's opens up the opportunity to examine Schmitt's relation to his religious faith and to the spark of his critique against liberalism in the early-mid 20th century.

Schmitt's view of the world is at odds with secular rational modernity. He argues that "The juridical foundation of the Catholic Church on the public sphere contrasts with liberalism's foundation on the private sphere" (RC 29).¹⁰ Schmitt himself explains that privatization "has its origin in religion. The first right of the individual in the sense of the bourgeois social order was the freedom of religion...If religion is a private matter, it also follows that privacy is revered. The two are inseparable. Private property is thus revered precisely because it is a private matter" (28).¹¹ For Schmitt, capitalist liberalism makes the mistake of privileging the private. In fact, the privatization of religion creates a secularized 'religion' of privacy (28). The public sphere, the common man, gives way to the private sphere and the private man. Read through the lens of Augustinian theology, the danger for Schmitt becomes the danger of losing the city of God on earth:

¹⁰ The private sphere has long been linked to the Protestant reformation – an interesting difference in Christianity that Schmitt is attentive to. See Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, passim; and Michael McKeon, *Secret Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge*, especially chapter 1.

¹¹ This origin is linked for Schmitt to Protestantism, which is a separate but related antagonism of his liberal critique.

Economic rationalism is so far removed from Catholic rationalism that it can arouse a specific Catholic anxiety...A marvelously rational mechanism serves one or another demand, always with the same earnestness and precision, be it for a silk blouse or poison gas or anything whatsoever...A devout Catholic, precisely following his own rationality, might well be horrified by this system of irresistible materiality." (RC 14, 15)

The Catholic rationalism that Schmitt refers to derives from the position of the pope. The pope "holds an office, an official duty that appears to be completely apart from his concrete personality" (14). This office is, however, not devoid of personality, nor mechanically rational, but designed as a representative placeholder for the personality of Christ. Christ is present through his representation, not by the pope but by the office of the pope. Schmitt's 'rationale' is a rationale of spirit represented in the material world – Augustine's city of God on earth. Catholicism, for Schmitt, does humanity the favor of recognizing this spiritual domain.

What then, of Schmitt's definition of the political? Foregrounding that later work, Schmitt posits in *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* that "the political mechanism has its own laws, which Catholicism as well as any other historical force embroiled in politics must obey" (16). The law of politics then is the construction of the way of life, the naming of the friend and the enemy,

and the act of war based on the decision to name the other as enemy. I have already shown how Schmitt discloses his Catholicism by drawing on religious beliefs to inform political decisions in *The Concept of the Political*, and how he thus challenges the prescription he gives for Catholicism to be obedient to, rather than informing of, the laws of politics. But to demonstrate the religiosity of Schmitt's politics would only be enough if I were working under the axiom that religion is antithetical to the public sphere. To do so would not engage in the complexity of the question of the relationship between Christianity and politics in Western thought.

It must also be pointed out, then, that Schmitt's theory is not consistent to the orthodox Catholicism that is at least partly responsible for the very construction of his theory. According to his political definition, the political belongs wholly within the public sphere. His valuation of the public sphere can be understood by opposing his Catholicism to economic rationalism. When Schmitt has to reconcile his theory with his theology in terms of biblical injunction, however, he must resort to a translation sleight of hand. In claiming that "an enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity," Schmitt contrasts the public enemy with the "private adversary whom one hates" (28). He takes care to point out that Christ's biblical commandment to "Love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27) was originally written with the Latin word "inimicus," meaning "private enemy." Inability on the part of the modern European

subject to recognize this, for Schmitt, is a problem of translation. He explains that the German translation, and this is true in English too, drops this more specific kind of enemy, so that when Christ says "love your enemies" in German or English he is saying in Latin, "love your private enemies." Schmitt affirms that the real, concrete, existential enemy as identified by a political decision is actually the "hostis," which is the Latin word for a public enemy, and not "inimicus," the private enemy with whom one might merely have interpersonal conflict. This private enemy is, according to Schmitt's translation, the only enemy Christ mentions. Thus Schmitt defines his political concept as both wholly public, and, while not religious, still safe within the confines of Catholic responsibility. As Derrida writes of Schmitt in *The Gift of Death*, "Christ's teaching would thus be moral or psychological, even metaphysical, but not political" (103).

Schmitt's understanding of Christianity then is that it provides useful instruction for interpersonal issues with neighbors, tax collectors, and the like, but not for conflict between collectivities. Christ "certainly does not mean that one should love and support the enemies of one's own people" (29). So in an interesting twist on the public/private distinction of Augustine, Schmitt wants to separate the private from the public and favor the public, but only inasmuch as the public is concerned with making a political decision. In his reading of the Bible, Schmitt asks that we use Christ to help us sort out private affairs, but to subject Catholicism to the greater force of the political. But if the

private-religious is a denigrated term, antithetical to both rational Catholicism and the concept of the political, then why does Schmitt relegate Christ's commandment to that private sphere?

Following Augustine, 'private' names what needs to be given to Christ. It is not Christ that needs to be given over to the private realm by humanity but humanity which must give up its private self to the public good. Abnegation of self and the recognition of God's good allows one to take part in the social, public life of the city of God. Private refers to the falling away from or the lack of good. As Augustine would conceive of it, this act of giving up oneself to God is both sacrificial and restorative - one gives up the private life; its rights, privileges, and pleasures, in order to return to the proper form to which one properly belongs, and to participate in God's public and social good. Schmitt also names as private what one must give to Christ, but in doing so he changes the act. He uses his translation sleight of hand to give Christ one thing (the private realm) in order to keep something else (the concept of the political) outside of his religion, and still he hopes to stay within its limits. His 'act of giving' becomes not an act of giving, but of withholding - he withholds the political from relationship to God, and from Christian responsibility. In an Augustinian sense, he privatizes the very concept he wishes to keep in the public realm by attributing a proper end to politics outside of submission to God.

It is interesting that Schmitt assumes the compatibility of Christianity with Greek concepts. As Derrida explains in *The Gift of Death*, when Christ says, 'love your enemy' in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, he quotes from the Torah, in Leviticus 19, which commands the Jewish people to "love thy neighbor as thyself." According to Derrida, Leviticus employs the Hebrew words "congénère," meaning fellow creature, and " 'amith," translated as same people or nation, to define the neighbor, so that the Hebraic term for neighbor cannot be reduced to the private sphere in the sense that the Latin does. In Derrida's words, then, "the sphere of the political in Schmitt's sense is already in play" in this commandment (104). Derrida's interjection of the Hebraic into this exchange of Western ideas serves as a reminder that however much Christianity is indebted to Greek thought, it is also connected to Judaism and to a line of thinking that is not traditionally Western. It is in this more comprehensive translation – for Augustine is grounding his discussion of the City of God in texts from the Hebrew Bible as well as from Greek philosophical modes – that Christianity remains suggestive in the public sphere and opens up, or keeps open, a discussion of the intersection of religion and politics.

Schmitt is inconsistent to his religion, yes, but does this mean that religion is antithetical to politics? Christianity is not born of one way of thinking, in that it has its own "accidents" of time and place shaping its ever-tenuous formation. To read Schmitt's case as an argument for a renewed separation of church and state, which might be a tempting interpretation, is to

forget that 'church' is not equal to faith or to notions of religious responsibility, and that the Christian church in any specific place or time is not equal to Christian theology or belief. A brief foray into 19th century Victorian England, in a time unsettled by rational-scientific modes of thought seen as increasingly at odds with religious narratives, exemplifies the sense in which I argue that the intersection of religion and politics should be critically engaged, not denounced.

From a modernist standpoint, the church is still a public institution that, as Habermas explains in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, "continue[s] to exist as one corporate body among others under public law" while its effects are officially of a private, moral nature (12). Unofficially, however, even when privatized in a secular sense religion cannot be merely a private matter, generally speaking. Victorian scholar Frank Turner provides an example in the works of Congregationalist R.W. Dale. In the 1880's essay "Every-day Business a Divine Calling," Dale explains that

It is convenient, no doubt, to distinguish what is commonly described as 'secular' from what is commonly described as 'religious.' We all know what the distinction means. But the distinction must not be understood simply to imply that in religious work we are doing God's will, and that in secular work we are not doing it. (qtd. in Turner 3)

Dale accepts the separation of public and private realms, from the standpoint that considers the public secular and the private religious, to an extent; “we all know what the distinction means.” But Turner concludes that Dale rejects the notion that the official privatization of religion could somehow limit divine authority in the life of a Christian. Even as Dale promotes a destructuring of church politics along Reformation principles (as most churches today do), he upholds the Augustinian notion that spiritual bonds are much stronger and more important than secular, humanly defined institutions. In other words, the public and private realms theorized by Habermas are secular, governed by reason, and consequently pertaining to the material world only. The public and private realms enacted in Christianity belong to a spiritual worldview; they are more than a set of moral codes. A spiritual worldview incorporates and purports to outlast, even inform, material conditions and circumstances. As a result, the public realm in a predominantly Christian community is going to be influenced and inflected by its spiritual worldview regardless of state doctrine that speaks more to official power than to spiritual worldview.

Chapter Two – Responsibility and The Ethics of Death

God is the name of the possibility I have of keeping a secret that is visible from the interior but not from the exterior.

Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*

Following the line of thinking that argues for critical engagement with the intersection of religion and politics, I wish to pursue a return of Christianity to the political. 'Return' has three different senses here. The first is a return to the question of Christianity and politics after an analysis of Schmitt. Because Schmitt's politics is not consistent with orthodox Christianity, what 'Christian politics' could mean has not been properly addressed. At the same time, a return reiterates that the polis is not a Christian concept, and that the two are not automatically reconciled to the same logic. This is the turn, following Schmitt, that I will address now. Finally, overshadowing this project is the return of Christianity to politics in the real historical sense of the War on Terror, which highlights the tension between the two concepts and makes urgent a discussion of what Christian politics can be said to be.

As a brief note of clarification, when I speak of religion, I speak of it, following Derrida, as responsibility ("religion presumes access to the responsibility of a free self" *Gift of Death* 2). Responsibility, prior to the term's deconstruction, is the space wherein one hears a call: "the call to explain oneself, one's actions or one's thoughts, to respond to the other and answer

for oneself before the other" (3). And while my discussion of religion and politics is meant to be inclusive, it is limited to Christianity by necessity of the context I work from in reading Schmitt and from my most immediate concern of the problem of U.S. politics. *The Gift of Death*, while treating at various points of all the religions of the book (Judaism, Islam, and Christianity), also focuses on Christianity as the religion of European responsibility – as the religion relevant to the concept of responsibility in Europe.

The Gift of Death begins with a close analysis and reading of Polish philosopher Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays on the Philosophy of History*. According to Derrida, Patočka's work offers a thesis on religion's "origin and essence":

A distinction is to be made between the demonic on the one hand (that which confuses the limits among the animal, the human, and the divine, and which retains an affinity with mystery...[and] the secret or the sacred) and responsibility on the other." (2)

The word 'secret' in the beginning of *The Gift of Death* refers to two different types of secrets (6). The first is the one in Patočka's thesis quoted above; the secret of a demonism that confuses boundaries, or the secret of the first mystery. Responsibility attempts to break away from this mystery by differentiating between oneself and the call from the other as the distinct other's call. The second is the secret of history, or the secret of responsibility

as historically-bound. Derrida explains that in the history of responsibility (as religion), responsibility itself is considered ahistorical or universal (5). Yet the history of responsibility betrays the ways in which responsibility is historically bound. Ethics, which is generally understood as a concern for principle, and for sorting out what principle could be, thus stands in tension with religious revelation, or responsibility as ahistorical and essentially true from a framework that stands outside of history.

History-as-history, or history as something that must remain open if it is to remain what it is, depends on responsibility, faith, and the gift (5). Responsibility here refers to the moment of decision-making that takes place beyond any absolute knowledge and therefore always leaves history open by way of the undecidable and the unknown. Faith invokes a relationship to the other that has as an originary structure in the history of responsibility an Other, and not just others; this too is marked by an unknown, and thus a risk. The other invoked by faith is evidenced by the gift, or "the gift of death that puts me into relation with the transcendence of the other, with God as selfless goodness, and...a new experience of death" (6). I am able to make the above statements, following Derrida, in part because of what Christianity has introduced to history and the history of responsibility, so that Christianity is as Derrida calls it "an irreducible condition for a joint history of the subject, responsibility, and Europe" (2).

How can this be so? Earlier I referred to the secret of the first mystery. *The Gift of Death* takes stock in its first chapter of the three mysteries of the orgiastic/demonic, the Platonic, and the Christian (10). Prior to the Christian event, Plato attempts to deliver philosophy from the first mystery, the orgiastic/demonic, through a process of internalization (7, 8). Using the allegory of the cave, Plato converts mystery from an outer to an inner experience. Whereas before mystery is the darkness without, the lack of sight or recognition of truth, and a confusion between boundaries of self, now the mystery "is the movement by which the immortality of the soul is affirmed" (11). As Patočka explains, "it is, for the first time in history, an immortality of the individual, since it is interior" (qtd. in *GD* 12). Established in the movement from exterior to interior then is both the individual and immortality – both the boundary of selfhood and a preliminary but not yet complete notion of a call to responsibility. The individual must take on (be responsible to) his or her own death. Philosophy is, according to the *Phaedo*, "the attentive anticipation of death" (12). Yet mystery is still present in Platonism because the triumph over death, or the dialectic of philosophy that puts one into relation with the immortal Good, "retains the traces of the struggle" (16). Essential to the triumph is the identification of a clear front: what is the triumph, and what is being triumphed over? This alludes to Schmitt's more specific concern with war, where liberalism does away with the possibility of identification and the

clear political concept that always relates to the possibility of war, itself a precondition for triumph in terms of a struggle.

The triumphant aftermath of the *polemos* or more specifically war-like struggle is for Derrida an "experience of the gift of death" in that one must both kill one's enemy (give them death) and give one's own life in sacrifice for one's country (17). To give life, and thus to accept the gift of death, only in order to receive life back through triumph (I give my life to my country, but I defeat my opponent and come back from the brink of death victorious), returns one to the demonic/orgiastic, because the celebration of victory which remembers the struggle enacts a kind of maniacal experience of "the joy of survival, or 'superexistence'" (18). In philosophy, this is the triumph over death through the inner contemplation of death and the positioning of oneself in relation to the immortal Good. This Platonic conversion of mystery from the outside to the inside retains the mystery it surpasses in that it celebrates the mortality it has given up (18).

Derrida refers to the Platonic incorporation of mystery from the outside to the inside as the conversion from the first (orgiastic/demonic) mystery to the second (Platonic). Connecting the three mysteries of the orgiastic/demonic, the Platonic, and the Christian are two conversions, the first of which (the Platonic) I have just described. For Derrida, the second conversion in the movement toward analyzing the history of European responsibility

seems to be intimately tied to the properly Christian event of *another secret*, or more precisely of a mystery, the *mysterium tremendum*: the terrifying mystery, the dread, fear and trembling of the Christian in the experience of the sacrificial gift. (6; emphasis Derrida's)¹²

The *mysterium tremendum*, or the fear and trembling before God and before the sacrifice that God grants to humanity, marks the transformation from the Platonic to the Christian.

Following Patočka, this transformation is essential because the Christian event trumps the Platonic. Platonic responsibility "will never become pure and authentic," as Derrida explains via an interpretation of Patočka, because the structure of secrecy – the secret of the first mystery – "keeps that mystery hidden, incorporated, concealed but alive" (20). From here the discussion of Christianity and what it does for the history of responsibility becomes more complicated. For the specific discussion of the Platonic incorporation, Derrida seems content to borrow from Patočka and agree with his interpretation. With the introduction of Christianity, Derrida continues to borrow what he considers useful from Patočka, but their arguments begin to diverge. For Patočka, Christianity improves the Platonic incorporation by means of a reversal, whereby "the orgiastic is not eliminated but disciplined, enslaved" (qtd. in *GD* 19). Derrida, on the other hand, wonders if the new Christianization of

¹² All emphases in quotes are Derrida's from this point forward unless otherwise stated.

responsibility represses, rather than reverses, the Platonic incorporation of the demonic in a way that is perhaps more fundamental to Christianity than Patočka acknowledges. This repression is political (21) because Platonism – a Platonism that is philosophical and political, as evidenced both by the analogous relationship between triumph over death in philosophy and war, and in the governance the Good has over the polis – persists in Christianity. Christianity fails to admit this historical precedence. On this point Derrida and Patočka are momentarily back in agreement (23). What matters now is how they deal with this repression of Platonism in Christianity and in how they think through what Christianity has to offer the history of responsibility.

Patočka argues that “Platonic rationalism...continues to secretly influence Christian conceptions” (qtd. in *GD* 24). Because of this, the question of responsibility “has not yet received an adequate thematic development within the perspective of Christianity” (qtd. in *GD* 25). The primary difference here between Patočka and Derrida is that, as Derrida explains, when Patočka “speaks of an inadequate thematization he seems to appeal to some ultimate adequacy of thematization that could be accomplished” (27). Derrida opposes this viewpoint because responsibility deconstructs itself. In one instance, responsibility must be given up to a certain extent of knowledge; without some process of informing oneself, of having reasons for making decisions, etc., one cannot be responsible. At the same time, in this same instance, responsibility, if enacted in the decision made through knowledge alone, is no longer

responsibility but the “technical deployment of a cognitive apparatus” (24).

Responsibility must assume some risk. This is the aporia of responsibility, that it must take place outside of absolute knowledge.

After working alongside Patočka for nearly half of *Gift*, Derrida explicitly states why he chooses Patočka to help him think through responsibility:

“[Patočka’s] essay involves a genealogy of...*Europe-responsibility* through the decoding of a certain history of mysteries, of their incorporation and their repression” (48). This refers to Patočka’s analysis of the mysteries and their conversions in Platonic and Christian thought. The transformative aspect of Christianity, for both thinkers, is “the properly Christian event of *another secret*” (6). Where Platonism attempts to internalize responsibility, making it a process of philosophy, of contemplation, of a being-toward-death, Christianity introduces a new mystery, one that is both external and internal. It is internal because it is still a secret: the relationship with God is an internal experience, one that can never be externally verified or observed. It is also external, though, because it is now a subjective relationship to another, the Other, as goodness and as the giver of the sacrificial gift. There is now an Other which predates and potentially foregrounds other-ness. The structure of other-ness was thought of in Greek philosophy, but the contemplation of mystery was limited to objectivity and a being-toward-death (philosophy) that did not involve the gaze of another. Christianity thinks other-ness through differently: being-toward-death involves an Other, and a gift.

From within this genealogy of responsibility and faith, what is essential about the gift and about death? Derrida argues that "the question of whether this discourse on the gift and on the gift of death is or is not a discourse on sacrifice and on *dying for the other*...concerns the very essence or future of European politics" (33). To explain Derrida's concept of the gift and move toward naming what Christianity contributes to the genealogy of responsibility requires a discussion of both the goodness that gives and why the gift is the gift of death. Derrida, following Heidegger, marks death as "that which nobody else can undergo or confront in my place" (41).¹³ Therefore, what makes me *me* is "given by death" (41). At the same time, this givenness of death is also what calls me to responsibility, for it is in the irreplaceability and inevitability of both my death and the death of the other that calls me out of orgiastic mystery (non-responsibility, non-being-toward-death.) For the Christian, then, responsibility is born out of relation to the Other. The givenness of death is given from the immortal Good, now God, to the created. The subjectifying of mystery, "God," binds the self into a relationship with this giver of goodness who gives each person the gift of death, which is a gift that each person must receive for themselves – no one else can take this gift from them or for them.¹⁴ And in Christianity there is Christ and the Revelation – the sacrifice of

¹³ As Derrida explains, one can die *for* the other, as a delay, but every one must die eventually. That is what is being emphasized here as irreplaceable.

¹⁴ This is a Heideggerian argument: One can cause another to die, but one cannot take that singular experience of death – she who receives death can only receive it for herself, regardless of the circumstance of death.

Christ, and the gift of death given by Christ that transcends the givenness of death (and becomes the gift of eternal life.)

The gift is the condition for responsibility, and yet it is also the condition whereby responsibility becomes irresponsibility. Derrida notes that the disparity between mortal and immortal, even without the revealed cause or originary sin of Christianity, equates responsibility to guilt. Because only infinite love can forget itself in its act of giving in order to move outside of calculation (as calculation would negate the giftedness of a gift), the mortal is in disproportion to his or her ability to engage in the act of responsibility. One's own singularity is constituted of death and hence finitude, which makes one unequal to the gift, given of infinitude, that constitutes the very givenness of death. Because responsibility is then unequal to itself, as Derrida notes, "one is never responsible enough" (51). This clever phrasing introduces Derrida's deconstruction of the concept of responsibility. Through a reading of the story of Abraham and Isaac which draws on Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, Derrida highlights the impossible tension between duty to God and duty to humanity. For Derrida the extraordinary paradox of the sacrifice of Isaac exemplifies "the most common and everyday experience of responsibility" (67). The relationship one has with God is the relationship one has with the other – and it is a relationship of response-ibility, of obligation to answer the call of God from which responsibility originates. However, I cannot answer this call without the risk or potential of abandoning my own (my own

family, my own friends, etc.; those who do not seem as others but are so in the Derridean sense) in the same way that God required Abraham to abandon his own family and people. Absolute responsibility forbids general responsibility (Kierkegaard's ethical sphere) because absolute responsibility precedes the general and takes precedence over the general. Here Derrida asks us to remember what is "too often forgotten by the moralizing moralists and good consciences who preach to us with assurance...about the sense of ethical or political responsibility": responsibility is an impossible paradox (67). With this Derrida challenges the particular order of Christianity that is obsessed with proclaiming absolute moral truths and would posit the other as the "evildoer" or as belonging to the "axis of evil." Such an understanding of responsibility fails to take into account the way in which responsibility is inadequate to itself. Derrida's argument, and the discussion of it here, rejects any stable concept of responsibility that would ground in faith the ability to prescribe with certain knowledge what the moral choice in any given situation 'is' or should be for another.

If Christianity cannot be said to adequately thematize responsibility, in opposition to Patočka, this does not mean that Derrida rejects responsibility or that Christianity has only offered a gift whereby responsibility becomes meaningless. On the contrary, and as a crucial moment in the introduction/return of Christianity to politics, the gift is also the condition for a responsibility that does not differentiate between neighbor and foreigner,

between this other and that other. "On what condition," Derrida asks, "is responsibility possible?" (50). And he answers: "On the condition that the Good no longer be a transcendental objective, a relation between objective things, but the relation to the other, a response to the other; an experience of personal goodness and a movement of intention" (50). Responsibility isn't fully expressed in Platonic thought, whereas Christianity provides the opportunity by which responsibility becomes deconstructible: both possible and impossible, and for Derrida (unlike for Patočka) inadequate to itself as a concept. 'Personal goodness' and 'a movement of intention' imply the subjective other. What has happened to responsibility in Christianity is that the introduction of the Other as structuring otherness broadens 'responsibility' beyond 'responsibility to those who are like me, and not to the other who is unlike me.' The Platonic argument that Schmitt follows, one that would identify certain others as enemies and 'naturally so', has no Goodness as giving goodness to trace otherness back to. Unlike the objective Good, which does not qualify as an(other), God as other is two crucial things: wholly other, and a goodness that *gives*.

Christianity as explained by Patočka creates a new understanding of responsibility with the transformation of the Good into God, a person, "a supreme, absolute and inaccessible being who holds us in his hand not by exterior but by interior force" (qtd. in *GD* 6). The concept of God introduces the concept of the gift, which is the gift of death or of an understanding of

death that puts one into relation with the other through relation to an originary Other (33). Instead of responsibility to the other by tautological force, Christianity places its subjects under the subjective, unequal gaze of an Other. This new subjective gaze breaks with the Platonic Good and with the *polis* that functions as a result of a responsibility borne out of an impersonal recognition with an objective Good that bears no structural or originary connection to the human other. The concept of the *polis*, related to the *polemos* of struggle or war as well as the philosophy of triumph over death, does not ground otherness in Otherness, or in the subjective call to which one must respond. Schmitt's work outlines a practical way of understanding the limitation of the polis' notion of responsibility when he tries to draw a line from Christ's words ("love thy enemy") back to Greek thought, eliding the Hebraic thinking that Christ necessarily draws from when he quotes the Torah. Greek thought does distinguish between enemy and foe in the manner Schmitt suggests, most cogently in the *Republic* where Plato speaks of inter-Hellenic (private) conflict as 'discord' and Hellenic-Barbarian conflict ("those who are by nature enemies") as war (*The Concept of the Political* 29n.) Platonic political theory would seem to distinguish different kinds of others, so that there are similar others with whom one has disputes, and other others who are natural enemies. There are then degrees of otherness and hence degrees of responsibility to the other, with the greater degree of responsibility being accorded to those who are seemingly more similar than different or inimical.

In drawing distinctions from the Platonic understanding of responsibility instead of responsibility as it can be understood through a reading of the Christian conversion, the Schmittian argument for making the friend/enemy distinction disintegrates. Originary responsibility comprises both the impossibility of responsibility and the necessity of some form of it: awareness of the other proceeds not from an objective Good, a non-other, but the Other, from whom all others as singularities must receive the givenness of death. God as wholly other is both the necessity and the impossibility of responsibility, both the call and the inability to fully discharge responsibility to answer the call. For Kierkegaard, the difference between human duty and duty to God is great. It is God's call to Abraham to be responsible to him, God, that puts Abraham in conflict with the general duty he has to all the others, the others that to him are not others – his son, his wife, etc. Yet again for Derrida, this difference is what the self faces everyday. From out of the Christianization of responsibility, Derrida introduces the phrase *tout autre est tout autre* – 'every other (one) is every (bit) other', as a key for understanding the other as both different and the same: every other is equally other, every other is wholly and completely other, and every other shares this complete otherness. This key collapses the difference between Kierkegaard's ethical and religious spheres.

Derrida notes that "The trembling of the formula 'every other (one) is every (bit) other' can also be reproduced. It can do so to the extent of replacing one of the 'every others' with God: 'Every other (one) is God,' or

'God is every (bit) other'" (87). Derrida's preliminary argument for the first substitution, 'every other (one) is God,' rests on the similarity of all others, God and humans, as wholly other. This substitution can also be located in an orthodox Christianity opposed to Schmitt's realist politics. In Matthew 25:31-46, Christ pronounces judgment via a litmus test of responsibility to the other. He affirms the righteous as such based on their treatment of him:

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. (v. 35,36)

The unrighteous he condemns for not doing the same. Yet both parties are ignorant of their encounter with Christ and ask him to explain.¹⁵ He answers that the physical needs of strangers, even those with the lowest social standing, are equivalent to the needs of Christ. Taking care of the other is the same thing as caring for Christ, and ignoring the need of the other is the same as denying Christ. In this way the otherness of the other is equally other in all situations. The formulation "every other (one) is God" is not a statement of pantheism, but a statement of the essential sameness of difference that both levels and heightens what responsibility means.

¹⁵ The ignorance or forgetfulness of the righteous group in regards to reward is discussed by Derrida in the final pages of *The Gift of Death*, even though he does not quote this passage from Matthew. See p 96-115.

The understanding of every other (one) as/is every (bit) other shows that responsibility can never be fully responsible. Furthermore, it demonstrates that realist political theory as articulated by Schmitt does not even consider responsibility at all, advancing as it does a Christian responsibility to humanity through a version of responsibility that is pre-Christian and ignorant of the mystery by which responsibility becomes both inadequate and necessary. In this respect, the notion that a nation's interests should be 'protected' regardless of the cost to the other, with retribution cast in Christian terms, is antithetical not just to Christian responsibility but a deconstructed responsibility as Christianity has contributed to its definition. As Derrida demonstrates, Christianity's gift to European responsibility is, in addition to the original Hebraic meaning of the term 'neighbor' which the Latin effaces, to understand that 'neighbor' as Schmitt defines the term accedes to a larger discussion of the other. What may be the most compelling here is the idea that responsibility cannot be separated or placed in spheres, with the religious over here and the political over there, or with some others in one place and the other others placed elsewhere. The one is too bound to the other, even in (and heightened by) absolute otherness, for that.

Conclusion

I began this work addressing my position in the university and questioning what it means to discuss politics and religion in an academic space. What does it mean to be engaged in the production and dissemination of knowledge when I am working with questions of faith? I hope to have shown that, if anything, this project affirms the need for critical analysis and for the discussion of religion in the public, as well as academic, spheres. Speaking as a U.S. citizen complicit in U.S. policies, I find it necessary to address first and foremost the violent and antithetical ways in which I see Christianity functioning in politics, particularly in the form of political realism and its connection, both in Schmitt and in post-9/11 U.S. foreign policies, to Christianity. Yet at the same time I wish to advance the concern that an oversimplified (or misunderstood) concept of the separation of church and state actually excludes religion not from the public sphere, which is impossible for the orthodox Christian, but from the space of critical discourse, where some benefit may actually proceed.

My aim, then, is for this project to carefully articulate an opposition to Schmitt's political realism based not only on the grounds that it is antithetical to orthodox Christianity, but that it is antithetical to any future political beyond both the Greek polis and a fundamentalist Christian government. Future projects that would enlarge and complement the scope of this work, then, would seek to further analyze political realism's relationship to Christianity

through such figures as Reinhold Niebuhr, as well as question the United States' realist political stance outside of and beyond the historical moment of 9/11 and the Bush administration's reaction to it.

Works Cited

- Augustine. *The City of God*. Trans. Marcus Dods. New York: Modern Library, 1993.
- Chomsky, Noam. *9-11*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Acts of Religion*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- . *The Gift of Death*. Trans. David Willis. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.
- . "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides." *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*. By Giovanna Borradori. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003.
- Habermas, Jurgen. "Fundamentalism and Terror." *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*. By Giovanna Borradori. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003.
- . *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.
- Piccone, Paul and G.L. Ulmen. "Introduction to Carl Schmitt." *Telos* 72 (1987): 3-14.
- Schmitt Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Trans. George Schwab. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996.
- . *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*. Trans. G.L. Ulmen. Westport: Greenwood P, 1996.
- Strong, Tracy. Forward. *The Concept of the Political*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996.
- The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford U Press, 2001.

Turner, Frank M. *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1993.

Ulmen, G.L. Introduction. *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*. By Carl Schmitt. Trans G.L. Ulmen. Westport: Greenwood P, 1996.